



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL
ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lorraine Ortiz lortiz@caribbeanhotelassociation.com
Melissa A. Rivera mrivera@caribbeanhotelassociation.com
Tel 787 725 9139/Fax 787 725 9108

**CHA CONTINUES TO LOBBY FOR TOURISM INTERESTS IN ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS
Ongoing efforts seek to ensure that recommendations for the liberalization of regional tourism
services are included in external trade negotiations that the Caribbean is involved in.**

San Juan, Puerto Rico (September 13, 2007) – While in Europe to attend a meeting with Spanish investors to be held this Friday in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, CHA President Peter J. Odle; David Jessop, Executive Director of the London-based Caribbean Council; and Alec Sanguinetti, CHA Director General and Chief Executive Officer, took the opportunity to meet earlier this week in Brussels with representatives of the European Union to discuss the ongoing Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations. The purpose of the visit to Brussels was to address the conclusion of an EPA between CARIFORUM and EU specifically.

The CHA delegation also held talks with CARIFORUM negotiators Ambassador Federico Cuello (Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to Belgium and the EU, and CARIFORUM's Lead Negotiator for Services and Investment), Ambassador Errol Humphreys (Ambassador of Barbados to Belgium and the EU and CARIFORUM's Alternate Negotiator for Services and Investment), as well as representatives of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM). On the agenda for the CHA meetings with the CRNM and the EU was the progress of EPA negotiations in general, but more specifically the chapter on tourism which was proposed jointly by the CHA and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO).

In 2006 the CHA built on its foundation of liaison with the CRNM on trade matters by commissioning the production of a joint CHA-CTO Position Paper on the CARIFORUM-EU EPA. This paper presented on behalf of regional tourism stakeholders detailed recommendations and positions on how tourism services should be treated within the EPA agreement. Simultaneous with the production of the Position Paper, CHA commissioned the production of a joint CHA-CTO Tourism Annex with a view to ensuring that appropriate rules and positions governing tourism services are integrated into the language of the actual EPA agreement.

- more -



HEADQUARTERS:

1000 PONCE DE LEÓN AVENUE, 5TH FLOOR • SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO 00907 • PHONE: 787-725-9139 • FAX: 787-725-9108

MIAMI OFFICES:

2655 LEJEUNE ROAD • SUITE 910 • CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134 • PHONE: 305-433-5900 • FAX: 305-569-0431

Over the past several months the CHA-CTO proposed EPA Position Paper and Annex were reviewed and discussed at the regional level. Following regional consultations, a proposal on tourism services was taken forward by the CRNM and tabled in negotiations with the Europeans. "We are very pleased with the inclusion of our suggested text on subject areas - such as competitive safeguards, access to and use of information (namely, Computer Reservation Systems and Global Distribution Systems - CRS and GDS), mutual recognition of tourism professionals, sustainable tourism development, technical assistance, and the establishment of a Joint EU-CARIFORUM Committee on Tourism," said CHA President Peter Odle.

Following the submission of the CHA-CTO tourism papers, it was agreed between CARIFORUM negotiators and the EU to include Tourism as a chapter within the EPA agreement rather than a separate annex - and this was seen as a positive development. The CHA has also provided its feedback to the CRNM on the proposed EPA tourism chapter, including its support of a number of new sections, including one on market access for tourism related services.

The CHA continues to place the inclusion of tourism in trade negotiations, especially the EPA, very high on its agenda. According to CHA President, Peter Odle, "The CHA continues to work with the CRNM to ensure our ongoing input on tourism concerns into the EPA negotiations, as they proceed now at an intensified rate. EPA negotiations are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2007. It is critical that the CHA continues to be engaged in the negotiation process in order to ensure that all aspects of the tourism industry are supported and defended in the trading arrangements that are agreed to within the EPA."

In Brussels, the CHA delegation also attended to other priority business matters, including a meeting with Pro€Invest - an EU-ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) partnership program of the European Commission - regarding an exciting new project involving small hotels in the region; a bi-annual update meeting with Caribbean ambassadors on tourism matters; and a meeting with the European Investment Bank regarding their potential participation in the soon to be launched Caribbean Tourism Investment Fund.

#

About the Caribbean Hotel Association - www.caribbeanhotelassociation.com

The Caribbean Hotel Association is dedicated to excellence in hospitality, leadership in marketing, and sustainable growth in tourism, to the benefit of its membership and that of the wider Caribbean community. It aims to be a regional forum that will advance the Caribbean hotel and tourism industry. The members of CHA represent the entire spectrum of hospitality industry's private sector, from 835 member hotels representing some 127,000 hotel rooms in 36 national hotel associations, to 520 allied members including airline executives, tour operators, travel agents, trade and consumer press, hotel and restaurant suppliers, and others.

HEADQUARTERS:

1000 PONCE DE LEÓN AVENUE, 5TH FLOOR • SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO 00907 • PHONE: 787-725-9139 • FAX: 787-725-9108

MIAMI OFFICES:

2655 LEJEUNE ROAD • SUITE 910 • CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134 • PHONE: 305-433-5900 • FAX: 305-569-0431

